



Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 April 2012

Information regarding the treatment of females in Pakistan.

A Chapter from the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* annual report, in a section titled “Women”, states:

“Over the year 2011, the social indices of development such as educational opportunities, employment, and health pertaining to women remained dismal with 65 percent of the workforce engaged in low paid and unrepresented home-based work. The floods continued to affect women and children adversely, with 120,000 pregnant women suffering from trauma, fatigue, malnutrition, and poor hygiene. The health indicators for women, particularly in rural areas, remained abysmal, with breast cancer being amongst the highest in South Asia and 40,000 deaths recorded annually. In urban centres, drug addiction amongst women with school and college degrees was recorded, and the percentage of attempted suicides by ingesting poison, the most discrete form of suicide rose, with up to five to six cases of teenage suicide attempts coming in daily in Karachi alone. The education indicators for women suffered from cultural practices and in some strife-riddled parts of the country—particularly in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—where girls' schools were targeted by the militants, leading to prolonged closures. Meanwhile, in urban centres, a number of cases of sexual harassment came to view in institutions of higher education and perpetrators were brought to book in accordance with the new laws. Incidents of domestic violence seemed to have increased in the Punjab province or perhaps were more adequately reported, while Sindh showed a downward trend and cases in Balochistan remained largely unmonitored and unreported. Parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained under threat of religious militancy and the state of Afghan refugees, particularly the condition of women, was inadequately monitored.” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) (20 March 2012) *State of Human Rights in 2011 - Chapter V: Rights of the disadvantaged*)

In a section titled “Cultural justification of violence: the "honour" crime chart” this report states:

“Throughout the year, women were callously killed in the name of ‘honour’ when they went against family wishes in any way, or even on the basis of suspicion that they did so. Women were sometimes killed in the name of ‘honour’ over property disputes and inheritance rights. According to media monitoring and field reports from HRCP volunteers, at least 943 women were killed in the name of honour, of which 93 were minors. The purported reasons given for this were illicit relations in 595 cases and the demand to marry of their own choice in 219 cases. The murderers were mostly brothers and husbands, in 180 cases the murderer being a brother and in 226 cases being the husband of the victim. The majority of cases (557) were of married women. Before being killed, at least 19 women were raped, 12 of them gang raped, and the means used were mostly firearms but also blunt weapons and strangulation. Among the honour killing victims were seven Christian and two Hindu women. Only 20 women killed in the name of honour were reported to have been provided medical aid before they died. Women murdered for reasons other than these numbered 936, of

which at least 532 were married and the killer was the husband in 259 cases, the victims' brother (52 cases), father (18 cases) and other close relatives (92 cases). They were mostly shot dead or strangled." (ibid)

An *IRIN News* report states:

"In its 2011 report on Pakistan the UK-based rights watchdog Amnesty International stated: 'Gender-based violence, including rape, forced marriages, "honour killings", acid attacks and other forms of domestic violence, was committed with impunity as police were reluctant to register and investigate complaints.' Previous studies, including one in 1999 by the New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) have come up with similar findings noting that violence against women was an 'epidemic'. HRW has since continued to campaign for laws to more effectively protect women. According to a survey released in June 2011 by Thomson Reuters Foundation's TrustLaw, (which describes itself as a global hub for free legal assistance and news and information on good governance and women's rights), Pakistan is the world's third most dangerous country for women after Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with 90 percent of women suffering domestic violence. Other forms of physical abuse are also common, states the report, based on assessments by gender experts." (IRIN News (28 September 2011) *Pakistan: Suffering in silence*)

A document published by the *Asian Human Rights Commission* states:

"Violence against women is a major health and human rights concern in Pakistan. Women can experience sexual, physical or mental abuse throughout their life cycle, in infancy, childhood and during adulthood or older age. Violence against women has severe physical and psychological consequences and as a social problem warrants an immediate coordinated response from multiple sectors." (Asian Human rights Commission (25 November 2011) *Pakistan: Domestic violence is the most under-reported crime and condoned by social customs*)

The 2011 *United States Department of State* country report for Pakistan states:

"Rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, honor crimes, abuse, and discrimination against women remained serious problems." (United States Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Pakistan*)

In a section titled "Women" this report states:

"Domestic violence was a widespread and serious problem. Husbands reportedly beat and occasionally killed their wives. Other forms of domestic violence included torture, physical disfigurement, and shaving the eyebrows and hair off women's heads. In-laws abused and harassed the wives of their sons. Dowry and family-related disputes often resulted in death or disfigurement by burning or acid. According to the Aurat Foundation, the cases of reported violence against women increased 12.5 percent from the previous year. The foundation reported that during the year 1,436 women were killed, 2,236 were abducted, 486 were victims of domestic violence, 74 were sexually assaulted, 32 were victims of acid attacks, and 633 women committed suicide. The HRCP reported that there were 371 incidents of domestic violence against women, including 82 attempted killings, 62 being set on fire, 12 burned by kerosene stoves, and 30 acid attacks. In addition, 655 women committed suicide, and another 382 women attempted suicide. According to a 2008 HRCP report, 80 percent of wives in rural Punjab feared violence from their husbands, and nearly 50 percent of wives in developed urban areas admitted that

their husbands beat them. Women who tried to report abuse faced serious challenges. Police and judges were sometimes reluctant to take action in domestic violence cases, viewing them as family problems. Instead of filing charges, police typically responded by encouraging the parties to reconcile. Abused women usually were returned to their abusive family members. Women were reluctant to pursue charges because of the stigma attached to divorce and their economic and psychological dependence on relatives. Relatives were hesitant to report abuse due to fear of dishonoring the family.” (ibid)

This section of the report comments on so-called “honour killings” as follows:

“Every year hundreds of women reportedly were killed in the name of honor. Many cases went unreported and unpunished. The News reported that in 2009, 29 women and 15 men were killed in 25 honor-killing incidents in KP. During the year 39 women and 29 men were killed in 20 incidents of honor killing. The HRCP reported that during the year there were 790 honor killings in the country. The practice of ‘karo-kari,’ which occurred in Sindh Province, continued across the country. Karo-kari is a form of premeditated honor killing that occurs if a tribal court or jirga determines that adultery or some other ‘crime of honor’ occurred. Karo-kari means ‘black male’ (karo) and ‘black female’ (kari), metaphoric terms for someone who has dishonored the family or is an adulterer and adulteress. Once a woman is labeled as a kari, male family members have the self-authorized justification to kill her and any coaccused karo to restore family honor. In many cases the karo is not killed or is able to flee.” (ibid)

An annual report published by the *Aurat Foundation* states:

“The fourth annual report shows that 8539 women became victims of violence in 2011 and there was an overall 6.74 % increase in reported cases of VAW in the country as compared to year 2010. The figure was 8000 in 2010; in 2009, the incidents of violence against women 8548 and; in 2008, these incidents were 7571. This shows that by and large the incidents of violence against women in the last four years were in the same range with some increase and decrease and; the society has not witnessed any radical departure in its trends in the unfortunate commission of crimes against women. This reflect a kind of a status quo, also indicating that neither State is doing to eliminate this violence nor society is responding to curb uncivilized behavior. In some forms of violence there has been notable increase, for instance, sexual assault increased by 48.65%, acid throwing increased by 37.5%, 'honour' killings by 26.57%, and domestic violence increased by 25.51%. AF considers this number as the 'tip of the iceberg' as the data collected by our staff is based on cases reported in media. It is an open fact that majority of violence against women incidents are not reported in the media.” (Aurat Foundation (15 February 2012) *Incidents of Violence against Women in Pakistan Reported during 2011*)

An *Amnesty International* document states:

“Dozens of Pakistani women every year suffer serious injury and physical deformity as a result of having acid or other corrosive substances thrown on them, often as a result of family disputes.” (Amnesty International (13 December 2011) *Pakistan crime bills must be springboard for better women's rights*)

This document refers to the issue of state protection as follows:

“Amnesty International’s research in Pakistan suggests that government-run women’s shelters are in dire need of an overhaul. Most are poorly funded and their staff lack training to deal with the trauma and other issues faced by victims. Police investigations are often compromised by political or family influence, corruption and a lack of basic training for dealing with gender-based violence. ‘The need for protecting victims of gender crimes is urgent. Acid attacks leave their victims hideously scarred and severely traumatised. Many lose their lives from inadequate medical attention while others cannot work or adequately care for their children, and face social prejudice,’ said Sam Zarifi. ‘The bills passed yesterday do not address these systemic failings of Pakistan’s criminal justice system. Authorities have failed to provide any clear strategy for addressing these problems or implementing the new laws.’” (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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